

Wishing you all
A Merry Christmas
& A Happy & Healthy New Year

SALTASH AND DISTRICT OBSERVER



December 2023 - Issue 379

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Tamar Tolls Set to Rise Again

As we approach the end of the year, users of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry are faced with an unwelcome Christmas present of a further increase in tolls. The two crossings are jointly owned and managed by Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council. Both parent authorities are under severe budgetary pressures, and councillors at a meeting of the Joint Committee of the two authorities held on 8th December were advised by their Finance Officers that any decision that did not increase the tolls would effectively plunge the two authorities in to bankruptcy as there was no funding to address the shortfall.

“It is infuriating that ‘No Increase in tolls’ was included in the recent consultation, even though it was not actually a viable option,” said Dr. Mel Priston, Chair of the Tamar Toll Action Group, a campaign group with over 3,000 members advocating for abolition of the tolls. Determined to make their voices heard, TTAG members demonstrated outside the Plymouth Civic Centre, where the meeting of the Joint Committee was being held.

Councillors at the Joint Committee recognised that

increased tolls would mean increased burden on local residents, but after a meandering debate took the decision to request increasing cash tolls to £3 and tag tolls to £1.50.

This comes at a time when Mebyon Kernow and the Liberal Democrats are advocating for a respite in the burden of tolls and are calling for the Tamar tolls to be completely abolished. Cllr. Colin Martin, Cornwall Councillor for Lostwithiel and Lanreath and Lib Dem parliamentary candi-

date for SE Cornwall, submitted a motion to Cornwall Council’s meeting on 28th November. Seconded by Cllr. Hilary Frank, Cornwall Councillor for Saltash Essa, the motion called on the Leader of Cornwall to work with the Joint Committee, Plymouth City Council and MPs to lobby the Government for the tolls to be abolished.

“Paying for the Bridge and Ferry centrally is the fair thing to do,” said Cllr. Martin in proposing the motion. TTAG submitted a range of challenging

questions to that same Cornwall Council meeting, and previous Transport Portfolio Holder Councillor Philip Desmonde queried the financial modelling for the Tamar Crossings. He spoke of the ‘cavalier’ manner in which he had been asked during his time as Portfolio Holder to “support toll increases when there was no long-term sustainable capital programme or financial model to ensure affordability.”

“The crossings are in financial crisis,” said Cllr. Martin, “and this motion seeks to tackle the long-term affordability for the two councils, for residents and for business.” He pointed out that the total cost of both crossings is just 0.001% of annual Government spending, which he claimed would have no noticeable impact on the national budget, whilst providing a real boost to the hard-pressed families and businesses of South East Cornwall and Plymouth.

The Chair of Cornwall Council decided the motion should be referred to the December meeting of the Joint Committee where the debate on proposals to increase tolls was being held. Speaking at the Joint meeting, Cllr. Frank stressed that all stakeholders should be collaborating to champion the abolition of tolls, referring to figures showing that tag holders in the PL12 postal area alone are paying approximately £2 million each year in tolls. “This is

Seasonal Spirit in Saltash

Saltash got into seasonal spirit as it always does so superbly with crowds packing a pedestrianised Fore Street for the ever popular Christmas Festival. Even the weather proved seasonal, a cold but crisp sunny day with frost glistening and snow visible on the distant hills.

From mid morning the crowds came to discover a street lined with stalls selling a variety of largely locally made Christmas gift ideas as well as food and drink for the many who stayed all day. There were also a variety of rides and entertainments bringing early Christmas magic to our youngest townsfolk and visitors.

Many also took the opportunity of visiting the magnificent Christmas Tree Festival in the Church of St Nicholas and St Faith, which seems to get bigger and better each year with over seventy glittering trees representing local schools, societies, businesses and organisations. The town museum was also open giving visitors a last chance to view this year’s exhibition before it is swept away for that of 2024, and also Elliott’s time warp grocer’s shop where visitors could sample mulled wine as well as the shopping experience of yesterday.

Continued on Page 5

money that could have been spent in local shops, giving our local economy a much-needed boost,” she said.

Following the decision to recommend an increase, a report setting out the impact on the budget for 2024-25 will be presented at an extraordinary meeting of the Joint Committee on 12th January, and recommendations from that meeting will be considered by both Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council in February. Increases in tolls have to be authorised by Government, so any increase is not likely to come into effect until November 2024.

“We will be at each of those touchpoints to challenge”, said Mel Priston, “anyone who wants to join us is encouraged to find TTAG on Facebook or Twitter.”



Photo Mary Crawford

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E: maryecrawford@hotmail.com

Town Messenger

Working for the People of Saltash

News from Saltash Town Council
Konsel an dre Essa



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Email: schooladmissions@cornwall.gov.uk

Education Welfare:
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educationwelfare@cornwall.gov.uk

Housing Department
Telephone: 0300 1234 161
Email: info@cornwallhousing.org.uk
Social Services Department
Telephone: 0300 1234 101
Email: children@cornwall.gov.uk

Social Services Department
Telephone: 0300 1234 131
adultcare@cornwall.gov.uk

Highways Department
Telephone: 0300 1234 222
Email: customerrelations@cornwallimited.co.uk

Transport Department
(Schools Transport)
Telephone: 0300 1234 101
(Bus Pass) Telephone: 0300 1234 222
Email: schooltransport@cornwall.gov.uk

Roads, Transport and Parking
Telephone: 0300 1234 222
Email: roadstransportandparking@cornwall.gov.uk

Waste Department
Telephone: 0300 1234 141
Email: via contact form on website only.

Cormac Solutions
Telephone: 01872 323 313
Email: customerrelations@cormacitd.co.uk
Fly Tipping:
Telephone: 0300 1234 141
Email: refuseandrecycling@cornwall.gov.uk

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Cornwall Councillors/ Wards

Saltash Essa ED
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Saltash Tamar ED
Cllr Sheila Lennox-Boyd
cldr.sheila.lennox-boyd@cornwall.gov.uk

Saltash Trematon & Landrake ED
Cllr Martin Worth
cldr.martin.worth@cornwall.gov.uk

Cornwall Councillors Cover such services as:
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Social Services
Highways
Waste & Recycling
Tamar Bridge

From the Mayor of Saltash

Seasons Greetings to Everyone in Our Wonderful Town.

A very big thank you to all those who took part in the Towns Remembrance commemorations a few weeks ago. It is an honour to play a small part in the activities, and the Town Council staff always ensure the service is well planned. I would like to offer a personal thank you to the team from the Saltash branch of the Royal British Legion, led by David Newman, he is ably assisted by Bill Dent and the Reverend Brian Anderson, alongside others over the two days of formal commemoration. We should not forget the loyal team of supporters who brave any weather to collect for the poppy appeal, in particular I want to mention Wendy, who is always outside the Coop. This year we joined with Wendy and others at the Borough War memorial at St Stephens Church on the morning of Remembrance Sunday in terrible weather conditions to pay our respects.

We were honoured to attend an event at Saltash Fire Station where Craig Jones was awarded a Queens Bravery Award for services whilst travelling as an off duty

firefighter. Craig was awarded this as one of the last recipients by her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, but the ceremony in Saltash was led by the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall in the last few weeks. We have made numerous other visits throughout the town, thank you for all the invitations, we try and attend them all. When we can we post pictures on the Town Councils Facebook page.

Thank you to everyone who came along to the Christmas Festival organised by the Saltash Chamber of Commerce Christmas Festival Committee, there was an amazing turnout for the whole day, with so many highlights. The weather held and I am sure everyone had a great time. This wouldn't happen without a dedicated team working hard in the background, thank you to all. This year the Town Council worked with the team to enable the towns Christmas lights to be switched on during the event, and I must offer my thanks to our Service Delivery team for ensuring things went smoothly.

Healthcare in Saltash

Last year, I was asked to chair a healthcare action group for the town. We have been



meeting regularly to try and achieve significant improvements in provision. The group has included local

stakeholders including Town and Cornwall Councillors, NHS professionals, including both of our GP surgeries, as well as from St Barnabas Hospital, and also key representation from those responsible for commissioning NHS provision.

The group recognises the excellent work already taking place in the town at both our GP Surgeries and at the hospital. St Barnabas Hospital may not be open for Minor Injuries or In-patient beds, but there are a range of important services offered from there and we would encourage everyone to ask for treatment in Saltash where appropriate.

The group have now agreed a vision document, that we very much hope will lead to local improvements. We would love you to have a look and let us know your views. Please Scan the QR code on this page to download the vision document.

*Councillor Richard Bickford
Mayor of Saltash 2023-24*

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ynqGBDRx175B7A7H2bcGxQ-HG428atH2/view>
Patients First
A Vision for Healthcare provision in Saltash



Mayors Charity Quiz

A date for your diary in the new year, a Quiz Night in aid of the Saltash Mayors Charities on Friday 19th January 2024. More details to follow on the Town Council Facebook page.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Your Town Council & Wards

Saltash Essa:

1. Cllr Richard Bickford
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5. Cllr Jon Foster
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6. Cllr Sheila Lennox-Boyd
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Mayor:

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Deputy Mayor.
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Councillors' Telephone Numbers can be obtained at The Guildhall.

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Meet Your Councillor

**Cllr. Sarah Martin
Tamar Ward**

This is currently my second term as councillor for the town and it's a role that I really enjoy. But that has to come with a caveat. As members of the Town Council we get involved in some very interesting discussions and decision-making for the town and it's not always easy to think about the best way forward - yet that is what is expected of us. It's our duty to gain as much knowledge as we can and to determine the best outcome for the residents of our wards that we represent on the Town Council. We are your voices and our votes on committees are decisions we make on behalf of residents in our wards.

I read all too often on the social media about the misgivings people have about councils in general. We're all given 'backhanders' and generally we don't carry out our roles appropriately. The grass isn't cut, the weeds aren't removed etc, etc. It's actually quite perturbing to read comments like that, especially when at the bottom of them is just misinformation. Sometimes it's not easy to recognise the



difference between the two councils that govern Saltash and what they are responsible for; most people think for example, that we are paid to be councillors on the Town Council when in fact, we are volunteers.

A lot of this I think comes down to communication, and as someone who works in Comms & PR, it's really important that going forward, as a Town Council we do everything we can to enhance our reputation but also to put pay to the misinformation in circulation.

The Town Council is currently working on a Communications Strategy as part of our new business plan which many of you will have read about previously. It's important the Town Council use all means available to us to keep you abreast of what is going on. It's taxpayer's money the Town Council is responsible for after all. It's an exciting time to be on a council which has so many plans afoot waiting to be rolled out once the

Histories And Mysteries of Sea Shanties Explained

“Since 1872 I have not heard a shanty worth the name” said a Victorian folk song collector, blaming steam power for the eclipse of the traditional ship's shanty man. Yet now sea shanties are enjoying a revival and even feature on Tik Tok, Roger Smith told a fascinated Ashtorre audience.

Himself a well known part of the Saltash music scene, Roger was speaking (and singing) the story of 'Histories and Mysteries of Shanties and Sea Songs'.

anticipated funding comes in! Rest assured; the Town Council will be making sure to let you know of all the good things coming your way to enhance this town we live in.

This page on Saltash Town Councils website gives you guidance on which areas the Town Council look after, and which ones are the responsibility of Cornwall Council: <https://www.saltash.gov.uk/who-does-what.php>. If you don't like to go online, our Service Delivery Team are a really friendly bunch and will answer any questions you may have as you're out and about - or just ask at the Guildhall or one of your councillors in our regular Meet Your Councillor sessions on Fore Street.

Shanties, he explained, were part of an ancient tradition of 'work songs' dating back to the dawn of civilisation, while 'sea songs' were purely for pleasure. He detailed the variety of shanties each intended to keep seamen in rhythm for a particular task. These included capstan, hauling and pumping shanties as well as 'forebitters,' used more for pleasure.

Among the surprises were that shanty-singing was limited to the merchant service, not the more disciplined and drilled Royal Navy. It was held taboo to sing them ashore. Roger enlightened his audience about the origin of the 'dead horse shanty,' which arose from the custom of lowering a stuffed figure of a horse onto the deck of the first ship's pay day.

With many such fascinating tales the audience entered fully into the drama of those sea days and lustily joined the chorus of well-known and lesser-known sea shanties, concluding with a lively rendition of 'Drunken Sailor.'

Library Literary Festival Delights Readers Young and Old

There was plenty to attract adult bookworms in the Literary Festival following the opening session given by the Cornwall Writers' Group. Saltash Library's large 'crime' section reflects the fact that 48% of books borrowed are by crime writers, and two well-known crime authors based in the south west came to talk and answer questions.

Graham Hurlley, who has recently published his 50th book, described how his writing skills have developed since as a 14 year-old schoolboy he first typed what he now describes as "the worst novel ever." He outlined how he wrote a synopsis for what became a popular TV series while in the Atlantic in search of the Titanic, and described how he sold his first books while working in television. He was shocked to be made redundant after 22 years in the television industry, but has since developed an international reputation as a thriller writer and is now branching into crime fiction and "enjoying years happier than I ever imagined."

By contrast, fellow best-selling crime writer Roz Watkins started writing in her mid 40s. After being amazed at the success of a short story she had entered in a competition, she went on to join a writing group, completed writing a novel and has since made appearances in best seller lists. She has recently moved to Cornwall, which she says will be the setting for her next crime

thriller. While enjoying her success she also warned of the challenges of being a writer and the need, in order to make a good income, to get books on to supermarket shelves in competition with well known 'celebs.'

Between children's and adult literature there is a growing genre of books with 'YA' (young adult) themes. One of the most successful YA writers is Emily Barr, who told of how her career in journalism led to her first published book 'Backpack', which was based on her own travel experiences. From this, she went on to write a number of psychological thrillers before moving in to YA writing, where her works are published in 28 languages. She is helped, she informed her audience, by her own household of teenagers who sometimes set her right and who appear, with their permission, as characters.

Each talk promoted lively discussion and each writer was eager to encourage would-be writers in the audience, while warning of the pitfalls of the profession.

Chamber Chairman Peter Ryland Keeping us Updated ...

The festive season is a time to enjoy and a time for reflection on all that has happened over the last 12 months. It is also time to show thanks to all those who have put in effort throughout the year.

As I have said in this column previously, I wear several hats. In this December issue, I would like to wear a Santa hat on top of all the others and thank those who volunteer their time to assist.

Wearing the Chamber hat, I'd like to thank those Chamber members who delivered the Christmas Festival, and those who have helped maintain business in the town.

With the Community Enterprises hat, my thanks go to the volunteers who have helped run the shop at No. 4 or the Community Kitchen at No. 8 Fore Street, the drivers who drive the buses and volunteers who help with the stall outside No. 8 to distribute fruit, vegetables and other food, often on cold and wet days. I'd also like to pay tribute to the Board of Directors - volunteers who devote a lot of time to ensure the smooth running of Community Enterprises.

Wearing the Scrapstore hat, there are again many

volunteers who run our shops, including those who have run the Christmas shop in the Courtyard which has raised money to go towards the Christmas Festival.

The Town Team hat allows me to give double thanks to the Chamber and Community Enterprises members who give extra time to be part of this group. It also allows me to thank Town and Cornwall Councillors for their steadfast support.

It never ceases to amaze me as to the number of people locally who are prepared to give their time in diverse ways in charities and voluntary bodies for the benefit of others. But there is still a need for more hands, so why not make a New Year's resolution to offer some of your time to volunteer and help others? It may be you only have a couple of hours a month, but every little bit helps.

Saltash is a strong community, but I would ask you all to do your bit to make it even stronger and help by volunteering. If anybody fancies helping with my administration then please send me an e-mail on peter@hilllane.co.uk.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.
Peter Ryland



On a snowy morning in National Tree Week, children from each of the four Saltash primary schools joined the Mayor and Mayoress of Saltash as well as Saltash and Cornwall councillors and members of Saltash Environmental Action to plant an oak tree in Longstone Park in a simple ceremony to mark the King's coronation.

The suggestion to mark the coronation with a tree came from the 2023 May Fair Committee. "We always hold the May Fair on the first Saturday in May," said May Fair lead organiser Hilary Frank, "and this year it was the same day as the coronation. Recognising the King's commitment to nature and the planet we incorporated several environmental initiatives in to the event, and planting a tree was one of them."

Saltash Mayor, Cllr. Richard Bickford, said: "It was a pleasure to hear how knowledgeable and passionate the children are about environmental issues. The Coronation Tree is a symbol of our collective commitment to a sustainable and vibrant future for generations to come."

The idea of planting a tree in Longstone Park, the venue for some of the May Fair festivities, coincided with Tree Saltash's intention to plant a replacement for the beech tree in Longstone, which had to be felled after it lost a large limb to fungal disease this summer.

National Tree Week marks the start of the annual programme of planting trees and hedgerows around Saltash. Speaking for Tree Saltash, Adrian White said: "Trees bring a vital touch of nature to our urban townscape: they improve the appearance and provide

loads of benefits such as habitat for wildlife, and shade, shelter and flood relief for residents - and they store carbon to help reduce climate change." Tree Saltash is supported by the Mayor and Saltash Town Council. Forest for Cornwall provide many of the trees."

BRYONY HINE
exp UK
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Oaklands Opens its Doors to a New Start

Volunteers in the Oaklands Community Centre have been working alongside Cornwall Housing to prepare the building just off Oaklands Green for a new beginning. Their hard work came to fruition at the official opening at the end of November when the Centre saw a steady stream of visitors led by the Mayor & Mayoress of Saltash.

"We want to build on the legacy of the previous committee," said James Jenkins, Chair of the Centre, "and have prepared a varied programme of activities that will make it a welcoming space where people can come together, make new memories and build lasting friendships." Activities include coffee mornings, art sessions and games afternoons.

For more information visit <https://oaklands.insaltash.co.uk>.

Pete's Point of View

I have on many occasions stated that Saltash has a wonderful community spirit and I am not ashamed to repeat myself with that assertion.

There are so many local community-based organisations, that to even attempt to list them here would risk forgetting to include many, not to mention the fact that there would not be sufficient column space for such a list.

Can I just say a huge thank-you to all those who give their time for the benefit of the Town, whether as part of a recognised organisation, or simply a public-spirited individual who keeps an eye open to ensure the wellbeing of elderly or vulnerable neighbours.

Christmas is a time when we look forward to spending time with family and friends, enjoying the festivities and looking forward to the coming year. But please do also spare a thought for those who have no family and for whom visiting friends is not an option. If you are able to make just a little difference and bring a little joy into somebody's life at this time of year, please consider doing so. You will have the satisfaction of knowing what you may have achieved.

Christmas is a busy period for many local organisations, including Saltash Rotary, which I am pleased to be a member of. With our connections, we are able to bring Santa to Saltash, where

amongst other places, he can often be found at the entrance to a well-known Supermarket on the northern edge of Town, together with his helpers. The generosity of residents and visitors never ceases to amaze me, with much money being raised for good causes.

Whilst talking of generosity, I would like to thank a local garage and car sales business that is not far from the previously mentioned Supermarket, who came to the rescue when new 'Elf and Safety' guidelines were introduced, requiring Santa to have a seat-belt fitted to the sleigh. The seat belt was duly fitted at no cost to Rotary, another shining example of how townfolk come together for the benefit of others.

Please do enjoy your Christmas and New Year break, no matter how long or short that break may be. We all hope for a better 2024 than the current year has proven to be, with such devastating conflict in Eastern Europe and the Middle East constantly in the headlines.

Pete Samuels.

Pete is a former Mayor of Saltash and past President of Saltash Rotary. Any views expressed are personal views and not that of any organisation with which Pete is associated.

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Essa Voices

A Brighter Future

As we get closer to 2024, I find myself reflecting on recent events, both in the realm of Cornwall Council governance and the Christmas Festival that brought our community together in the town centre.

empowerment, but on scrutiny actually falls far short of true devolution. Yes – it hands over control of the adult education budget to Cornwall Council and delivers a financial injection of £500,000 to support Cornish distinctiveness and the Cornish language, but all of this is a modest nod rather than a genuine handover of power.

Saltash Scrapstore & Too

Now Open in the Courtyard
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Pop-up Christmas Fundraiser Shop
Everything Christmas for the Christmas Bargain Hunters
Seasonal Goods ...

Christmas Decorations * Trees * lights
Tinsel, Baubles, Cards Gift Wrap, Tags & Toys
An ever-changing array of traditional items
Christmas Craft Items
(card-making, fabric, wreath-making etc)
Expect to visit us more than once for a variety of festive bargains!

All Profit will go towards funding the Christmas Festival & Lantern Parade
Volunteers Required!!
A variety of roles to suit everyone. No experience required.

Please Join us if you have a few hours to spare

Our mission is to minimise the amount that goes to landfill we provide an outlet for our supporters to

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Re-purpose
Discarded materials.

Local people and businesses generously donate all our stock to us.

Donations & Sales
Bring your unwanted STUFF along to us!
We will make sure it is put to good use by recycling it.

Art * Sewing * Craft * Household
No clothes, shoes books (*apart from craft books*)
We will take anything that someone can use or reuse and try and find the best home for it!

Do You...Need Art & Craft Supplies?
...Have a Household Project to tackle?
...Have Youngsters to Amuse?

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The Lights Came on as the December Dusk Fell on Fore Street

As the December dusk fell on Fore Street there was a slow surge towards the stage, where Saltash Radio had been broadcasting live throughout the day, in anticipation of the countdown to the switch on of the town's festive lights.

to be presented for the best dressed Christmas windows. The young judges from Brunel and St Stephen's schools, who took their job very seriously, had decided that the Chamber of Commerce Cup should go to Piglets, while the Children's Champion Cup was awarded to West Country Embroidery.

Then it was time for all to join in the countdown before the Mayor and Mayoress threw the plunger and the street was lit up to a round of spontaneous applause. The river of light, which can be seen from the bridge, was once more a fitting welcome to Christmas in Cornwall.

A choir of primary school children then took their turn in leading the community in singing some traditional carols in a service led by Redeemer Church, which had also organised a children's Festive Treasure Hunt with clues in various town centre windows.

After the carols, there was time to seek out the Treasure Hunt clues or to revisit the stalls for late evening shopping before the Lantern Parade, the climax of the Festival's events, appeared at the foot of Fore Street.

Seasonal Spirit in Saltash

Santas on Bikes

A deep throaty growl was overheard above the cheerful chatter of the Christmas market shoppers as an estimated five hundred – a record number – of Santas mounted on motor bikes crossed the Tamar and turned into the town. Many bikes were adorned with tinsel and mini Christmas trees and several had a Christmas elf mounted on pillion. There were three-wheeler bikes, quad bikes and many classic bikes all of which paused to line the street during a ten-minute pasty break. Then they were on their way into Cornwall bearing gifts for the Children's Hospice Southwest near St Austell leaving just an aroma of petrol to mark their passing.

Santa Fun Run

All two hundred places were taken up for what has become established as a Saltash Christmas tradition, the Santa Fun Run. Children, parents and grandparents, all in Santa suits and beards made a colourful sight as they



assembled at the top of Fore Street. A musical warm up dance or two were enjoyed by all before the Mayoress, Mrs Sarah Bickford, sounded the klaxon, the signal for the strange sight of two hundred



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Councillor Hilary Frank
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possible thanks to Saltash Town Council's generous financial contribution of £1,500, while Scrapstore contributed an amazing £3,750. As a member of the Chamber of Commerce, which delivered the Festival, I'd like to say how grateful I am to these two organisations as well as to the groups and individuals who helped create magical memories, particularly Redeemer Church Saltash, Tamar Trotters Running Club and Saltash Radio.

As the clock strikes midnight on 31st December, may it symbolise not just the start of a new year but also the beginning of positive change where resolutions become realities and the burdens of the past are replaced by a brighter, fairer future for One and All.

Wearde Road Bus Shelter to Return

Roadworks to improve the cycling and walking routes to Saltash Community School meant that the bus shelter on Wearde Road was removed earlier this year. Although it was well-used, the shelter was apparently 'in limbo', with no individual body responsible for maintenance. "Many residents contacted me asking to have it reinstated", said Cornwall Councillor Hilary Frank, "and I am pleased to advise that Cornwall Council has agreed to take on the maintenance and have scheduled an installation for January 2024."

£1,750 Raised at the Pop-Up Shop



Santa receives a cheque from the elves at Scrapstore's Pop Up Christmas Shop in the Courtyard at the top of town. Thanks to generous donations of time and goods, £1,750 was raised for the Saltash Christmas Festival.

Bridging the Tamar Seeks New Volunteer Bridge Ambassadors

The Bridging the Tamar Visitor and Learning Centre opened in 2019 following a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is supported by the Tamar Crossings Joint Committee. It has welcomed many families, locals and holiday-makers since then. Visitors can enjoy guided bridge tours, walks and talks, and the chance to find out more about Brunel's iconic Royal Albert Bridge as well as its companion the Tamar Bridge. Anchorage Tours involve heading underground to see where the cables meet the Earth. Schools can enjoy bridge building activities, and curriculum linked workshops from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4.

Entry to the Centre is free of charge and the Centre is open from 10am to 4pm every day. The Centre offers many free interactive activities such as mini bridge building, costume dress-up station, interactives and video content.

Bridge Ambassador Volunteers are on hand to welcome visitors, deliver tours of the Centre and local area, and support school visits. The events programme which volunteers support includes the Plymouth History Festival, Heritage Open Days, special anchorage tours, and local regattas, amongst other things.

Guided talks are led by volunteers on Tuesdays Thursdays and Saturdays. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bridging-the-tamar-guided-introductory-talk-tickets-383928990947> Groups such as the USA can also book bespoke tours.

Volunteer Bridge Ambassadors are now being recruited again to support the Bridging the Tamar Centre during 2024. They will join an existing corps of 30 people from Cornwall and Devon who help the Centre's work. The Bridge Ambassador role is varied, and roles are flexible.

The Ambassador position has various roles within it - Bridge Guides give guided tours and talks, Welcome Hosts provide a friendly face to visitors in the Centre, and Archive and Research Assistants find out more about the histories of the bridges and the surrounding areas.

Applications are being invited if people are interested in joining. Those interested will have an informal interview followed by a full induction and training process. No prior knowledge of history or engineering is necessary, and the most important thing is that they enjoy helping and meeting people from all walks of life.

If people are interested they can download an application form from

<https://www.bridgingthetamar.org.uk/volunteering/> If they have any issues filling in this form or have any other queries please contact Mark Tebbs on 01752 361577 or e-mail volunteer@tamarcrossings.org.uk



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Sustainable Saltash

A regular column on changes Saltash residents are making to confront climate and ecological breakdown.

Each year, as we approach that most wonderful time, I feel a familiar sense of trepidation. Mixed with the excitement of seeing family, being together and enjoying good food, there is the same nagging concern I have had for years. What am I to do with all of the stuff?

After a twelve-month period of trying to reduce consumption and act more sustainably comes a week where I grit my teeth and work extra hard to do the very opposite. I have to. It's Christmas. I don't want to be the person who says this thing that so many of us feel but don't acknowledge. I spend the whole year trying to change things, I should back off. Surely my family enjoy this opportunity. Anyway, it's for the children and I can't spoil it for them. It's what they want isn't it?

Well, actually I am less sure of that this year. My daughter is voting with her feet. As she grows, she is increasingly out somewhere, has her head in a borrowed book, or is just sat watching telly and trying to mind her

own business. When I have a spare hour, she wants to spend it with me. Out around the town, watching a film, in the woods or on the coast path. Like most of us, she has a hard to reach itch that tells her she needs lots of things, usually because one person has them (never mind all the others who don't). Yet the reality is beginning to dawn that these things are never as good once you have them as you hope. The joy is purely in the acquisition. She also spends all year being told what plastic is doing to our landscape, how weather is shifting and becoming more damaging and how it is important that we go through life a bit more thoughtfully, taking less. We reach December and we shower her in short-life plastic and things she didn't ask for - knowing it's not right. Then we do it to each other. The rest of parenting is so much about leading by example, so why do this?

2023 will be different. We've spoken together and with family, explored what few things the three of us really need or want, where

Saltash Ferry Links

A biographic, photographic and musical lecture was delivered at Ashtorre Rock recently by local historians Sue and John Hooper as part of a wider programme of enlightening cultural events organised by Lynn Marsh, Chair of Ashtorre Rock in aid of the Saltash Ferry Sculptures Brass Plaques replacements project. A spokesperson for the 'Saltash Ferry Links' Social Media platform advised that the brass panels on the sculpture, which tells the story of the ferry through images which has lovingly been created by Saltash artists and moreover, through the words of those who remember the ferry. Sadly however, the damp and salty waterside environment has tarnished the brasses much more than was expected, making them difficult to read; therefore they have been removed and sent away for refurbishment. The work is being funded by the myriad of diverse events at Ashtorre Rock and by the generous sponsorship from Osprey Metal Finishers, who are undertaking the work at their North London workshop. The brass panels should be back in place early in 2024.



money would be well spent and bring joy. I actually think most are relieved. Times are harder and money doesn't go as far, so who needs more anyway? There will be fewer presents, but they will be meaningful. We will remember who they came from. Given and received with love and not from obligation, a handful of gifts that will be cherished because they already have a place and meet a need or a longing. The rest will be exchanged free of cost for the gifts of fun, companionship and love.

Merry Christmas to all of you
Marc Bramham
This column is a conversation starter for our whole community. If you have comments on the subject, ideas of your own or suggestions for future content, please do get in touch at sustainable.saltash@protonmail.com

Victoria Cross Holder to be Commemorated

A Victorian sailor who was one of the first to be awarded a Victoria Cross and who later settled to become a Saltash pub landlord is to be commemorated in the town that he made his home.

William Odgers VC was the first to win the coveted cross on New Zealand soil, and one of the first 'other rankers' to achieve it. He died on 20th December 1873 and the 150th anniversary of his death is to be marked at his graveside at St Stephens church.

The Mayor of Falmouth, the town of William Odgers' birth, will be present alongside the Mayor of Saltash and senior Royal Navy officers. All are welcome to attend the short ceremony at 11am on 20th December.

William Odgers was landlord of the Union Inn from

1868 until his death in 1873, and the present-day landlord is intending to mark the event with an evening of shanty singing and pasties. For more information contact Barry Brooking on 01752 844050.

Contact the Observer
01579 345699
07971 484872

It's Christmas and Time to Celebrate!

Christmas can be such an exciting time, but also so stressful especially if you are trying to stay positive when money is a worry. How about getting back to the real reason for the season and make an effort to get along to one of our lovely local churches this year? I'm sure they would all appreciate seeing you and make you feel welcome.

I'm part of Saltash Baptist Church by the train station and here's what we have going on:
Children's Christmas Party (Reception to year 5)
Wednesday 13th, 4-5.15pm
Youth Christmas Party (Years 6-11)
Wednesday 13th, 4.45-6pm
Baby and Toddlers Christmas Party
Thursday 14th, 1-2.30pm
Nativity Service (all children turning up can join in!)
Sunday 17th, 10.30-11.30am
Carol Service
Sunday 24th, 10.30-11.30am
Christmas Day celebration
Monday 25th, 10-10.45am
Christmas Day meal (free for all)
Monday 25th, 12-3pm

You don't have to be a regular attendee or participant to come to any of these events.

Find Saltash Baptist Church online or on Facebook to find out more information and to book in, especially for the Christmas Day meal. Otherwise, just turn up!

However, if you don't feel you can get out, there are still lots of other ways to sprinkle some Christmas magic without spending lots. Put on a living room show, walk around your area to see the local Christmas lights or just stay in and get

crafting. You can make all kinds of fun festive decorations from things found around the house, and reduce waste at the same time. Here are just a few ideas:

Use kitchen roll tubes, tissue paper and string to craft your own crackers.

Collect pine cones, dip them in PVA glue and sprinkle with salt to create mini snowy Christmas trees.

Create a herd of mini reindeer using bottle corks, twigs, buttons and string.

Remember it's important to enjoy Christmas without getting into financial difficulty. If you're worried about debt, coping on a low income, budgeting or finding work, visit capuk.org/help to find out about the free support offered by Christians Against Poverty (CAP). From all of us at CAP, we hope you have a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Tim Squires is part of Christians Against Poverty (CAP), a UK charity working with over 800 affiliated churches to deliver debt help, budgeting guidance, support to find work, life skills education and more. Visit capuk.org to find out more.

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We Need to Act Now

With temperatures falling and the festive season in full swing, the most common Christmas wish for many Cornish families is simply to have a warm home in which they can afford to live. But the distressing truth is that despite being one of the world's wealthiest countries, there are still millions of people in the UK without this basic necessity. There are three parts to this problem: a shortage of affordable housing, high heating bills and low incomes.

There are 25,000 families in Cornwall on the waiting list for affordable housing whilst 25,000 houses in Cornwall are being used as holiday accommodation. Both numbers have surged in the past two years as many residential landlords realised they could make more money from Airbnb than they can from a residential tenant.

And although over two thousand new houses are built in Cornwall every year (including at the major development at Treledan), there is nothing to prevent most of them being used as holiday homes. In 2021, I called on Cornwall Council to declare a 'Housing Emergency', and worked across party lines to develop a list of five policies which we all agreed would make a big difference, but so far only one of them has been enacted.

Secondly, heating bills are too high because most Cornish



homes (especially rented homes) are poorly insulated and the price of energy virtually doubled last year due to the invasion of Ukraine. From 2010 to 2015, Liberal Democrats in government quadrupled our offshore wind capacity and oversaw rapid rollouts of onshore wind and solar panels, as well as setting targets for new homes to be self-sufficient (i.e. generating enough renewable energy to cover their heating requirements). Regrettably in 2015, the Conservative

government called these policies "green crap" and jettisoned most of them, prolonging our dependence on gas for another decade. The failure to invest between 2015 and 2022 has led to the government having to spend £78 billion in the past two years supporting households and businesses through the gas crisis.

If this amount of money had been invested in insulating our homes, upgrading our heating systems and installing more renewable energy production, we'd all have enjoyed lower bills, and we'd have created thousands of well-paid jobs in every corner of the country, easing the 'low incomes' part of the cost-of-living trilemma.

As global leaders gather in the UAE for another climate summit, the same message applies: sooner or later we're all going to need to make these changes. The best time to act was twenty years ago, but the next best time to start is now!

For more details on this and other stories, including the Tamar Tolls, visit www.seclibdems.uk

Colin Martin

Leader of the Lib Dems in Cornwall Council

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Saltash Town Band Become Double Champions



photo: Saltash Town Band on stage at the Riviera International Centre (Torquay)

Following their recent success in the South West Brass Band competition, Saltash Town Band once again proudly boasts more contested top awards.

The Band took part in the 75th South West Brass Band Association (SWBBA) Annual Contest in the Riviera International Centre in Torquay on Saturday 4th November.

The Band took to the stage with 32 members, including five under 12's, playing 'The Dark Side of the Moon' by

Paul Lovatt-Cooper, a piece they have enjoyed working on for a short 7 weeks after their trip to the National Finals of Great Britain in September. They were delighted to gain 1st place.

For the first time in the Band's history, they have become Double Champions, gaining 1st place in their 2 main contests of the year. They are extremely proud of these achievements.

A spokesperson for the Band said: "During the competition classes the adjudicator delivered very

complimentary comments and warm encouragement, which was well received".

Reflecting upon leading the Saltash Town Council's Commemorations during the Civic Remembrance Parade on November 12th, the Band is now looking forward to a busy Christmas season before the preparations begin for the Regional Competition in March 2024 and indeed, their promotion to the 3rd section.

To continue to strengthen their Senior Band and further develop the Training Band, the Band would welcome new members playing any instrument; indeed, the Band will happily find a seat for enthusiastic personnel to join them.

The Band invites those interested to call Saltash Town Band Manager Ali Ellis on 07718906335 for further details.

Mayor Supports Lottery Bid



"Saltash Tennis Centre Chairman Chris Cansfield was delighted to meet with the Mayor Richard Bickford and his Deputy Julia Peggs who attended to hear the exciting new proposals for the sites redevelopment.

A bid to the National Lottery compiled by Richard Miles and Mike Madden was submitted with a view to the site becoming four all weather courts covered by floodlighting. Infrastructure improvements to fencing and digital entry would allow easy access to members and the public, who could then extend their playing hours on all courts into the evenings unrestricted by lighting conditions and the weather. The Mayor was pleased to support the bid and to offer the full assistance of the Town Council, saying that any improvement to sporting facilities, which encourages people and particularly our young people to exercise was clearly to be welcomed."

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Just Thinking Aloud

Looking forward to Christmas? So am I. But in 2022-23 926 adults and 685 children in the PL12 postcode area needed emergency food from Saltash Foodbank. If you want to know more, there is lots of information on the 'net or at their 18 Belle Vue Road premises. What has gone wrong with our society?

As a toddler in pre-Welfare State and pre-NHS times I was raised in a poor working class family in the poorest part of postwar Manchester, but I was fed, clothed, shod, can't recall going without a square meal, and it was but rarely that I felt cold. In 2023 we are one of the richest countries in the world, and yet regard foodbanks as part of normal life, also "warm banks" and "baby banks".

In the last five years the number of folk experiencing destitution in the UK has more than doubled and is forecast to get worse. This is real – it is not so called "fiddlers and scroungers" manipulating the system. Something needs to be done. We can and do donate to this and other charities, but the root cause has to be addressed. What we need is a political system which pushes for a preferential option for the poor.

So what does a good society look like? It is one in which folk from all backgrounds and political colours are prepared to sink their differences in some areas for an agreed common cause. Was this not what Churchill and Attlee did in

the war years? It didn't last though, did it?

Throughout my life I have had an increasing impression of politicians blindly knocking lumps out of each other while our world hurtles on prioritising power and greed as climate change inexorably results in our extinction.

Talking of extinction, I wonder if everything that has been going on in Westminster might result (eventually!) in the extinction of the performance of politics as we have known it....Personally I would welcome the sort of change which would include some kind of proportional representation, where nobody could become an MP without

securing over 50% of votes cast. I might even be open to compulsory voting – but that'll never happen, at least not in my lifetime. Our current MP Sheryll Murray might not share my version of real democracy.

I note from the December 1st forecast by Electoral Calculus (you can find them online) that in the next general election she could count on 33.2%, with Labour on 29.7% and LibDems 20.4%. Yes, that means in our ridiculous "first past the post" system she would still come out on top, but more than a bit of a comedown from 2019, and things could still get worse for the poor lamb.

Reform UK are currently on 10.1%, Greens 5.5%, Others 1.2%. Labour and LibDems could do a deal with each other – but that's something else that'll never happen. Probably not, but as I often say, there's no harm in hoping.

Happy Christmas everyone!
Bob Munro

Windy Ridge Cafe

We are now offering free tea or coffee to on duty emergency services ... Including our police, ambulance and fire service along with our amazing volunteer blood bikers. Call in it will be our pleasure.



Photo Mary Crawford

Overwhelming Generosity from the Saltash Rock Choir

Once again the Saltash Rock Choir put the best foot forward and supported the Saltash Food Bank for Christmas. The effort and generosity of donations was truly stunning with their largest presentation to date.

It is truly heart warming to think of the happiness they will bring to many of those in need through no fault of their own. Marcus Alleyne musical director alongside organisers Janice Pinkham & Emma Wilkinson handed over this "cornucopia of goodies" to

Mayor of Saltash, Richard Bickford & Mayoress Sarah Bickford.

Richard Margetts from Saltash Food Bank thanked the Rockies for all their hard work and assured them many families will enjoy Christmas because of their generosity.



Photo local ambulance crew stopped off for a very welcome free coffee.



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